



## *Opening Statement*

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### **Statement of Chairman John Katko (R-N.Y.) Subcommittee on Transportation Security**

#### **Markup of H.R. 3102, H.R. 3144, and Committee Print**

#### **Remarks as Prepared**

The Subcommittee is meeting today to markup three important pieces of legislation aimed at enhancing transportation security, reforming programs within the Transportation Security Administration, and creating a more robust culture of industry engagement and accountability within the TSA.

During my time as Chairman of this Subcommittee, I have come to understand that effective oversight of TSA is of the utmost importance to our national security. TSA was born out of the tragedy of September 11th, and, like good Americans, we invested significant resources in a newly formed agency to protect Americans from being further victimized by terror plots targeting our transportation systems. However, more than a decade on, it is important that we in Congress take a top-to-bottom assessment of this young agency and drive reform in the way it conducts business and secures our nation's critical transportation modes.

The first bill we will consider is H.R. 3102, the "Airport Access Control Security Improvement Act of 2015." Building on months of Subcommittee oversight, including multiple briefings, hearings, and stakeholder meetings, as well as a review by the Aviation Security Advisory Committee, this legislation takes meaningful steps toward implementing a number of important ASAC recommendations, while also broadening the scope of assessment of airport access controls. This bill is an important step in closing security vulnerabilities at our nation's airports and making airports a safer place to work.

The need for this legislation has unfortunately been consistently highlighted over the last year by a number of high-profile arrests of aviation workers, who have been caught exploiting their secure access to avoid detection of dangerous criminal activity and security screening. H.R. 3102 directs TSA to establish a risk-based screening model at airports across the United States, which will help ensure that individuals with access to secure areas are authorized to have such access and are deterred from posing a threat to aviation. Moreover, the legislation will result in a review by TSA and the FBI of disqualifying

offenses against which those with access to secure areas of airports are vetted to determine whether modifications should be made to bolster worker vetting. Finally, the bill also takes steps to close data gaps used to determine work authorization and employee suitability and also mandates a cost and feasibility study on potential enhancements to employee access points.

The Subcommittee will also consider the “Transportation Security Administration Reform and Improvement Act of 2015,” a Committee Print which serves as part of the Committee’s broader reform and authorization process for the Department of Homeland Security. This text reforms a number of key TSA policies and programs, increases operational efficiency, and authorizes important risk-based efforts within TSA. Notably, this print authorizes the TSA PreCheck program and underscores the Committee’s intent to continue reforming TSA into an intelligence-driven, risk-based agency. Additionally, it will provide the Administrator with the authority to donate critical security screening equipment to overseas airport operators in a responsible manner to protect American citizens and meet the evolving threat landscape to aviation security.

A number of watchdog recommendations to improve privacy protections and correct screening and watchlist matching errors are also addressed in this print. In order to drive innovation within the agency, TSA is directed in this effort to pilot and implement technology solutions to verify identity and travel documents of the traveling public with the goal of linking such systems to the watchlist matching programs, making checkpoints more efficient and secure. Lastly, this text commissions a number of important efficiency reviews by TSA and GAO aimed at duplicative programs and offices within the agency.

The third item being considered today is H.R. 3144, the “Partners for Aviation Security Act,” sponsored by Mr. Payne. This commonsense legislation ensures that TSA does not make sweeping policy decisions in a vacuum, specifically regarding the modification of the prohibited items list, and makes a technical modification to the law establishing the Aviation Security Advisory Committee, which will ensure a continuity of membership and full participation between member terms. This bill also requires a report on the activities and composition of the Transportation Security Oversight Board, so that Congress is kept apprised of this statutorily-mandated entity.

I thank Members on both sides of the aisle for their bipartisan support and cooperation on these important oversight efforts, and I look forward to sending these legislative items on to the Full Committee for consideration. This Subcommittee has been extremely engaged in providing rigorous oversight to the Transportation Security Administration in a bipartisan manner, and I am pleased that we are taking these important steps today to further protect the American public, and ensure the security of our vast and critical transportation network.

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